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10/737,244	12/16/2003	Mark A. Bresnan	F-773	6361
7590 Michael J. Cummings Pitney Bowes Inc. 35 Waterview Drive P.O. Box 3000 Shelton, CT 06484			EXAMINER WU, RUTAO	
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/737,244

Applicant(s)

BRESNAN ET AL.

Examiner

Rob Wu

Art Unit

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 December 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-75 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-75 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 7, 18-20, 45, 56-58 and 62-75 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

1. The numbering of claims is not in accordance with 37 CFR 1.126 which requires the original numbering of the claims to be preserved throughout the prosecution. When claims are canceled, the remaining claims must not be renumbered. When new claims are presented, they must be numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered claims previously presented (whether entered or not).

Misnumbered claim 63 has been renumbered 62, and claims thereafter are accordingly renumbered.

2. Claims 7, 18-20, 45, 56-58 are objected to because of the following informalities: the claims recite "a rule that messages that include particular...", is difficult to understand. In the interest of compact prosecution the Examiner suggest modifying the statement to recite "a rule that messages including particular...". Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

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4. Claims 7, 8, 18-20, 45, 46, and 56-58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

5. Regarding claims 7, 18-20, 45, 56-58, the phrase "may, or may not" renders the claim indefinite because it is unclear which limitation the applicant regards as the invention. See MPEP § 2173.05(d).

6. Regarding claims 8 and 46, the phrase "and/or" renders the claim indefinite because it is unclear whether the applicant is claiming one limitation or both limitations. See MPEP § 2173.05(d).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

7. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

8. Claims 1-6, 12-17, 21-24, 31, 34, 36-41, 50-55, 59-62, 69, 72, 74 and 75 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat No. 5,058,030 to Schumacher.

Referring to claim 1:

A message processing system for preparing a plurality of messages to be distributed to recipients, the system comprising:

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A consolidator module receiving data corresponding to the plurality of messages, the consolidator module programmed to consolidate multiple of the plurality of messages into a single message package, the consolidator module consolidation the message based on first criteria; (col 4: lines 36-40; col 10: lines 38-40)

A distributor module couple to the consolidator module and receiving a data stream containing consolidated message packages, the distributor module programmed to determine optimal routing for production of message packages based on second criteria. (col 10: lines 18-27)

Referring to claim 2:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module is programmed to format the consolidated message packages in accordance with the determined optimal routing. (col 10: lines 18-27)

Referring to claim 3:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the recipients are customers and the consolidator module and the distributor are coupled to a customer relationship management system, the customer relationship management system determining at least some of the first and second criteria. (col 10: lines 20-27)

Referring to claim 4:

The message processing system of claim 3 wherein the customer relationship management system determines a template for message packages

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and the template is transmitted to the consolidator module for forming the message packages. (col 10: lines 31-40)

Referring to claim 5:

The message processing system of claim 4 wherein the template includes marketing content developed by marketing tools in the customer relationship management system. (col 10: lines 31-40)

Referring to claim 6:

The message processing system of claim 3 wherein the first and second criteria include marketing business rules determined by the customer relationship management system. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 12:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the consolidator module and the distributor are coupled to a statement applications processing module, the statement applications processing module determining at least some of the first and second criteria. (col 11: lines 8-11)

Referring to claim 13:

The message processing system of claim 12 wherein the statement applications processing module provides message business data to the consolidator module for forming the message packages. (col 11: lines 8-11)

Referring to claim 14:

The message processing system of claim 12 wherein the statement applications processing module receives data from an automated data factory having a plurality of mail production sites. (col 11: lines 5-11)

Referring to claim 15:

The message processing system of claim 14 wherein the distributor module receives postal delivery metrics, and wherein the distributor module calculates transit times for message delivery from the plurality of mail production sites. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 16:

The message processing system of claim 14 wherein the second criteria includes quality requirements and wherein the distributor module receives service and quality metrics corresponding to the plurality of mail production sites, and wherein the distributor module routes message packages based on sites meeting the quality requirements. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 17:

The message processing system of claim 12 wherein the first and second criteria include sender rules received from the statement applications processing module. (col 11: lines 7-11)

Referring to claim 21:

The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize time for delivery of messages to recipients, and whereby the consolidator module and distributor module form and route message packages in order to minimize time for delivery. (col 10: lines 22-26)

Referring to claim 22:

The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to maximize throughput of message packages, and

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whereby the consolidator module and distributor module form and route message packages in order to maximize throughput. (col 4: lines 22-39)

Referring to claim 23:

The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize mail production costs, and whereby the consolidator module and distributor module form and route message packages in order to minimize mail production costs. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 24:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the consolidator selects messages for consolidation from the plurality of messages based on the messages including a same delivery address. (col 10: lines 31-40)

Referring to claim 31:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on real time site production data. (col 10: lines 6-15)

Referring to claim 34:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on historical site production data. (col 4: lines 15-20)

Referring to claim 36:

The message processing system of claim 34 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on historical costs of site operation. (col 4: lines 15-20)

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Referring to claim 37:

The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on postal service delivery time data for respective sites. (col 4: lines 15-20)

Referring to claim 38:

A method for processing and preparing a plurality of messages to be distributed to recipients, the method comprising:

Receiving data corresponding to the plurality of messages; (col 4: lines 36-40; col 10: lines 38-40)

Consolidating multiple of the plurality of messages into single message packages, said consolidating of the messages into consolidated message packages based on first criteria; (col 4: lines 36-40; col 10: lines 38-40)

Determining optimal routing for production of message packages based on second criteria; (col 10: lines 18-27)

Transmitting the message packages to one or more of a plurality of message production sites based on the optimal routing. (col 10: lines 18-27; col 11: lines 7-10)

Referring to claim 39:

The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal routing includes designating electronic presentment of the message packages and the step of transmitting includes electronic presentment of the message packages. (col 11: lines 7-10)

Referring to claim 40:

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The method of claim 38 further comprising the step of formatting the consolidated message packages in accordance with the determined optimal routing. (col 11: lines 6-13)

Referring to claim 41:

The method of claim 38 further comprising the step of determining at least some of the first and second criteria through a customer relationship management system. (col 4: lines 9-21)

Referring to claim 50:

The method of claim 38 further including the step of determining at least some of the first and second criteria with a statement applications processing module. (col 10: lines 22-26)

Referring to claim 51:

The method of claim 50 further including the step of providing message business data from the statement applications processing module for forming the message packages. (col 10: lines 22-26; col 11: lines 7-11)

Referring to claim 52:

The method of claim 50 further including the step of receiving data from an automated data factory controlling the plurality of mail production sites, and using said automated data factory data for determining said optimal routing. (col 10: lines 10-16)

Referring to claim 53:

The method of claim 52 further including receiving postal delivery metrics, and the step of determining optimal routing includes calculating transit times for message delivery from the plurality of mail production sites. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 54:

The method of claim 52 further including the steps of:

Receiving service and quality metrics corresponding to the plurality of mail production sites. (col 10: lines 10-16)

Including quality requirements in the second criteria (col 10: lines 10-16)

Determining the optimal routing of message packages based on sites meeting the quality requirements. (col 4: lines 15-21; col 10: lines 10-16)

Referring to claim 55:

The method of claim 50 wherein the step of determining at least some of the first and second criteria includes incorporating sender rules received from the statement applications processing module. (col 10: lines 20-26)

Referring to claim 59:

The method of claim 55 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize time for delivery of messages to recipients, and the steps of consolidating and determine optimal routing are controlled to form and route messages packages in order to minimize time for delivery. (col 4: lines 15-21; col 10: lines 22-26)

Referring to claim 60:

The method of claim 55 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to maximize throughput of message packages, and the steps of consolidating and

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determining optimal routing are controlled to form and route message packages in order to maximize throughput. (col 4: lines 22-39)

Referring to claim 61:

The method of claim 55 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize mail production costs, and the steps of consolidating and determining optimal routing are controlled to form and route message packages in order to minimize mail production costs. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 62:

The method of claim 38 wherein the step of consolidating includes selecting messages for consolidation from the plurality of messages based on the messages having a same delivery address. (col 4: lines 35-40)

Referring to claim 69:

The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal routing is based on real time site production data received from the plurality of message production sites. (col 10: lines 10-15)

Referring to claim 72:

The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal site routing is based on historical site production data. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Referring to claim 74:

The method of claim 72 wherein the step of determining optimal site routing is based on historical costs of site operation. (col 4: lines 15-20)

Referring to claim 75:

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The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal site routing is based on postal service delivery time data for respective sites. (col 4: lines 15-21)

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

9. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

10. Claims 7, 18, 19, 32, 33, 35, 42-45, 56, 57, 70, 71 and 73 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schumacher.

Referring to claim 7:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose that the message processing system of claim 6 wherein the marketing rules include a rule that message that include particular marketing content may, or may not, be consolidated.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of certain market content not to be consolidated. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient as market contents could contain personal information of the recipient.

Referring to claim 18:

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Schumacher does not expressly disclose that the message processing system of claim 17 wherein the first criteria include a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be consolidated.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of certain business content not to be consolidated. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient as business contents could contain personal information of the recipient.

Referring to claim 19:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose that the message processing system of claim 17 wherein the first criteria include a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be householded.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of certain business content not to be householded. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not allowing information about multiple recipients to be sent to the same address and risking compromising recipient information.

Referring to claim 32:

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Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 31 wherein the distributor module determines whether a site or a machine at a site is non-operational, and wherein the second criteria include a failover site or channel designation, and whereby the failover site or channel designation is used for optimal routing instead of the non-operational site or machine.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Schumacher to monitor and determine whether a site is operational and direct the mailing jobs to another site if the first site is not operation. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such method to ensure continuous job processing. Schumacher provides further motivation by disclosing that "due to continuous on-line communications, the data center can choose an inserter for a particular job and take into account not only equipment and other resources available to each inserter, but also current workloads and the ability to complete the job within the time frame desired by the publisher." (col 10: lines 10-15) From this disclosure it is clear that Schumacher is capable of monitoring job sites and determine if anyone of them is non-operational.

Referring to claim 33:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 31 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on real time costs of site operation.

Schumacher does disclose that it is capable of matching job sites based on: job completion time, job costs, mailing and distribution costs, and mail

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delivery times. (col 4: lines 15-20) Schumacher also disclose that it is capable of choose an inserter for a particular job and take into account not only equipment and other resources available to each inserter, but also current workloads and the ability to complete the job within the time frame desired by the publisher (col 10: lines 10-15). Therefore it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Schumacher to determine an optimal job site based on real time costs of site operation.

Referring to claim 35:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 34 wherein the distributor module, in determining optimal routing, determines whether quality improvements can be made over past performance.

However, the Examiner takes official notice that it would be obvious at the time of the invention was made for Schumacher to determine whether quality improvements can be made over past performance. It would have been in Schumacher's interest to improve quality to be able to process more jobs and produce more revenue.

Referring to claim 42:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 41 further comprising the step of determining a template for message packages with the customer relationship management system.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that a template for message packages is determined with the customer relationship

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management system. The template is determined such that the customer will receive consolidated mailing that is addressed to the customer.

Referring to claim 43:

Schumacher disclose the method of claim 42 wherein the step of determining the template comprises including marketing content developed by marketing tools in the customer relationship management system. (col 4: lines 36-40)

Referring to claim 44:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 41 wherein the step of determining the first and second criteria includes marketing business rules determined by the customer relationship management system.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that marketing business rules are determined by the customer relationship management system, it is determined by Schumacher stating that publishers can send recipient advertisements. (col 4: lines 36-40)

Referring to claim 45:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 44 including a step of preventing messages from being consolidated based on the marketing rules that include a rule that messages that include particular marketing content may, or may not, be consolidated.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of certain business content not to be consolidated. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal

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information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient as business contents could contain personal information of the recipient.

Referring to claim 56:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 55 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled by the first criteria which includes a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be consolidated.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of certain business content not to be consolidated. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient as business contents could contain personal information of the recipient.

Referring to claim 57:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 55 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled by the first criteria which includes a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be householded.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of certain business content not to be

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householded. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not allowing information about multiple recipients to be sent to the same address and risking compromising recipient information.

Referring to claim 70:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 69 wherein the step of determining optimal routing includes identifying whether a site or a machine at a site is non-operational, and wherein the second criteria include a failover site or channel designation, and whereby the failover site or channel designation is used for optimal routing instead of the non-operational site or machine.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Schumacher to monitor and determine whether a site is operational and direct the mailing jobs to another site if the first site is not operation. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such method to ensure continuous job processing. Schumacher provides further motivation by disclosing that "due to continuous on-line communications, the data center can choose an inserter for a particular job and take into account not only equipment and other resources available to each inserter, but also current workloads and the ability to complete the job within the time frame desired by the publisher." (col 10: lines 10-15) From this disclosure it is clear that Schumacher is capable of monitoring job sites and determine if anyone of them is non-operational.

Referring to claim 71:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 69 wherein step of determining optimal routing is based on real time costs of site operation.

Schumacher does disclose that it is capable of matching job sites based on: job completion time, job costs, mailing and distribution costs, and mail delivery times. (col 4: lines 15-20) Schumacher also disclose that it is capable of choose an inserter for a particular job and take into account not only equipment and other resources available to each inserter, but also current workloads and the ability to complete the job within the time frame desired by the publisher (col 10: lines 10-15). Therefore it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Schumacher to determine an optimal job site based on real time costs of site operation.

Referring to claim 73:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 72 the step of determining optimal routing includes determining whether quality improvements can be made over past site performance.

However, the Examiner takes official notice that it would be obvious at the time of the invention was made for Schumacher to determine whether quality improvements can be made over past performance. It would have been in Schumacher's interest to improve quality to be able to process more jobs and produce more revenue.

11. Claims 8-11, 20, 46-49 and 58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schumacher in view of U.S. Pub No. 2004/0230523 to Johnson.

Referring to claim 8:

Schumacher disclose consolidating mailing inserts based on plurality of factors. Schumacher does not expressly disclose that the message processing system of claim 3 wherein the first and/or second criteria include customer preferences.

Johnson disclose that the recipient can opt for paper delivery of the consolidated bills, and allowing the post office to determine the best routing method accordingly. [0029]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to process the messages based on customer preference. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such modification to provide convenience to the customers.

Referring to claim 9:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 8 wherein the first criteria includes a customer preference on whether or not consolidation is desired.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of customer choosing whether consolidation is desired. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so

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to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not having a separate entity collecting personal information.

Referring to claim 10:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 8 wherein the first criteria includes a customer preference on whether or not householding is desired.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of customer choosing whether householding is desired. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not sending information about multiple customers to one place.

Referring to claim 11:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 8 wherein the second criteria includes a customer preference of physical mail or electronic delivery.

Johnson disclose allowing the consolidated bills to be send electronically or via traditional paper mail. [0029] Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to also allow the customer to choose between physical mail or electronic delivery. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such modification to provide the customer with more convenience in choosing form of delivery.

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Referring to claim 20:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 17 wherein the second criteria include a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be electronically delivered.

Johnson disclose allowing the consolidated bills to be send electronically or via traditional paper mail. [0029] Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to also allow the sender to choose between physical mail or electronic delivery. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such modification to provide the sender with more convenience in choosing form of delivery:

Referring to claim 46:

Schumacher disclose consolidating mailing inserts based on plurality of factors. Schumacher does not expressly disclose gathering customer preference data and including it in the first and/or second criteria.

Johnson disclose that the recipient can opt for paper delivery of the consolidated bills, and allowing the post office to determine the best routing method accordingly. [0029]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to process the messages based on customer preference. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such modification to provide convenience to the customers.

Referring to claim 47:

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Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 46 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled based on the first criteria which includes a customer preference on whether or not consolidation is desired.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of customer choosing whether consolidation is desired. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not having a separate entity collecting personal information.

Referring to claim 48:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 46 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled based on the first criteria which include a customer preference on whether or not householding is desired.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher would allow the option of customer choosing whether householding is desired. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not sending information about multiple customers to one place.

Referring to claim 49:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 46 wherein the step of determining optimal routing is based on the second criteria which includes a customer preference of physical mail or electronic delivery.

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Johnson disclose allowing the consolidated bills to be send electronically or via traditional paper mail. [0029] Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to also allow the customer to choose between physical mail or electronic delivery. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such modification to provide the customer with more convenience in choosing form of delivery.

Referring to claim 58:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 55 wherein the step of determining optimal routing is based on a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be electronically delivered.

Johnson disclose allowing the consolidated bills to be send electronically or via traditional paper mail. [0029] Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to also allow the sender to choose between physical mail or electronic delivery. Schumacher would be motivated to perform such modification to provide the sender with more convenience in choosing form of delivery.

12. Claims 25-27, 29, 63-65 and 67 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schumacher in view of U.S. Pub No. 2002/0133472 to Stepno.

Referring to claim 25:

Schumacher disclose consolidating messages based on plurality of factors (col 4: lines 15-20). Schumacher does not expressly disclose that the message processing system of claim 24 wherein the consolidator selects messages for consolidation based on messages having due dates proximal in time.

Stepno discloses consolidating messages based on messages having due dates proximal in time. [0015], [0022]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to also consolidate the message based on due dates proximal in time. Schumacher provides specific motivation by disclosing the need to reduce costs for entities involved in co-mail (col 3: lines 9-15).

Referring to claim 26:

Schumacher disclose consolidating messages based on plurality of factors (col 4: lines 15-20). Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 25 wherein due dates of messages selected for consolidation are adjusted by the consolidator module to match.

Stepno discloses due dates on the message are adjusted by the consolidator. [0022]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to adjust the due date of the messages in order to consolidate them. Schumacher provides specific

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motivation by disclosing the need to reduce costs for entities involved in co-mail (col 3: lines 9-15).

Referring to claim 27:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 25 wherein the consolidator module determines whether a customer preference authorizes consolidation for a particular message, and whereby consolidation is disallowed by the consolidator module if there is no authorization.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher's invention would check for customer authorization of consolidation and not perform consolidation unless an authorization is found. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do seek authorization before performing consolidation so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not having a separate entity collecting personal information.

Referring to claim 29:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose that the message processing system of claim 25 wherein the consolidator module determines whether a customer preference authorizes householding for a particular message, and whereby householding is disallowed by the consolidator module if there is no authorization.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher's invention would check for customer authorization of householding and not perform householding unless an authorization is found. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do seek authorization before performing householding so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not sending person information of plurality of recipient to the same address.

Referring to claim 63:

Schumacher disclose consolidating messages based on plurality of factors (col 4: lines 15-20). Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 62 wherein the step of consolidating includes selecting messages for consolidation based on messages having due dates proximal in time.

Stepno discloses consolidating messages based on messages having due dates proximal in time. [0015], [0022]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to also consolidate the message based on due dates proximal in time. Schumacher provides specific motivation by disclosing the need to reduce costs for entities involved in co-mail (col 3: lines 9-15).

Referring to claim 64:

Schumacher disclose consolidating messages based on plurality of factors (col 4: lines 15-20). Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of

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claim 63 wherein the step of consolidating includes adjusting the due dates of messages selected for consolidation so that consolidated messages have the same due dates.

Stepno discloses due dates on the message are adjusted by the consolidator. [0022]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher to adjust the due date of the messages in order to consolidate them. Schumacher provides specific motivation by disclosing the need to reduce costs for entities involved in co-mail (col 3: lines 9-15).

Referring to claim 65:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 63 wherein the step of consolidating includes determining whether a customer preference authorizes consolidating for a particular message, and whereby consolidating is disallowed if there is no authorization.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher's invention would check for customer authorization of consolidation and not perform consolidation unless an authorization is found. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do seek authorization before performing consolidation so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not having a separate entity collecting personal information.

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Referring to claim 67:

Schumacher does not expressly disclose the method of claim 63 wherein the step of consolidating includes determining whether a customer preference authorizes householding for a particular message, and thereby householding is disallowed if there is no authorization.

However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention that Schumacher's invention would check for customer authorization of householding and not perform householding unless an authorization is found. As it is well known in the art that recipient privacy and personal information are important and therefore Schumacher would be motivated to do seek authorization before performing householding so to provide convenience and protect the privacy and personal information of the recipient by not sending person information of plurality of recipient to the same address.

13. Claims 28, 30, 66 and 68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schumacher in view of Stepno in further view of Johnson.

Referring to claims 28 and 30:

Schumacher combined with Stepno disclose sending advertisements with the message to the recipient. (Schumacher col 4: lines 36-40) Schumacher combined with Stepno does not expressly disclose the message processing system of claim 27 wherein, if the customer preference does not authorize consolidation or householding, the consolidator generates content to be included in the message that describes benefits of consolidation or householding.

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Johnson disclose that sellers often offer discounts for quick payment.

[0006] Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher combined with Stepno to send an advertisement describing the advantages of message consolidation to the recipient, such as discounts offered.

Referring to claims 66 and 68:

Schumacher combined with Stepno disclose sending advertisements with the message to the recipient. (Schumacher col 4: lines 36-40) Schumacher combined with Stepno does not expressly disclose if the customer preference does not authorize consolidation or householding, the consolidator generates content to be included in the message that describes benefits of consolidation or householding.

Johnson disclose that sellers often offer discounts for quick payment.

[0006] Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Schumacher combined with Stepno to send an advertisement describing the advantages of message consolidation to the recipient, such as discounts offered.

Conclusion

14. Examiner's Note: Examiner has cited particular columns and line numbers in the references as applied to the claims below for the convenience of the applicant. Although the specified citations are representative of the teachings in the art and are applied to the specific limitations within the individual claim,

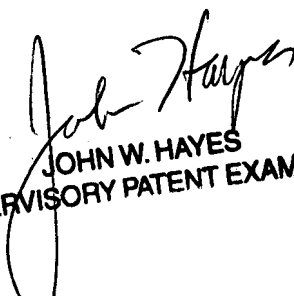
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other passages and figures may apply as well. It is respectfully requested that the applicant, in preparing the responses, fully consider the references in entirety as potentially teaching all or part of the claimed invention, as well as the context of the passage as taught by the prior art or disclosed by the examiner.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Rob Wu whose telephone number is (571)272-3136. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri 8-5.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on (571)272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


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